

# Castlemaine Naturalist

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*Congratulations Ern Perkins O.A.M. We are proud of you and the Club has certainly benefited from your work over the years.*



## Carlisle State Park

If you're looking for something somewhat different from the Box-Ironbark country, and not too far distant, then the Carlisle State Park is well worth a visit. Just south of Colac and not well known, despite occupying 56000 ha., it is a landscape of sandy heath, open woodland and riparian rain forest communities lying on the northern slopes of the Otway Ranges.

A sense of remoteness is one of its attractions despite being simple to get to and easy to get around, with interrupted views over the ridge lines that seem to go on for ever. While there is no camping in the park, thankfully, there is a perfectly good caravan park at Gellibrand at the northern entrance and excellent overnight accommodation at the Gellibrand River Valley cabins - fully self-contained and very comfortable with bird and orchid prizes on the doorstep - literally!

Out of the 74 bird species counted in a day and a half the 'specialities' included Gang-Gang and Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos, King and Blue-winged Parrots, three Cuckoo species, Frogmouth and Owlet-nightjar, Azure and Sacred Kingfishers, Rose Robin, Satin Flycatcher and Rufous Fantail, Southern Emu Wren, Rufous Bristlebird, Crescent Honeyeater, three kinds of Woodswallows, the Forest Raven (one of the few populations outside Tasmania) and a white-phase Grey Goshawk.

There are 250 vascular plant species recorded for the Park with some rare and restricted to the area. With help from the botanically clued-up members of the Atlassing group we were able to list the Short Purple Flag (*Patersonia*), Flying-duck Orchid, Spiney-headed Flat-rush, Wiry Bauera, Spreading Guinea-flower, Snowy Daisy-bush, Swamp Paperbark, Sweet Wattle, Mat Goodenia, Hop Goodenia, Showy Parrot-pea, Prickly Bush-pea, Blunt-leaf Heath, Tall Yellow-eye, Heath Milkwort, Mountain Milkwort, and Wedding Bush.

Outside the closed heathland the dominant tree species of the open woodland is Brown Stringybark, Narrow-leaved Peppermint, and candlebark. The taller forest has its Swamp Gums, and along the creakiness and in the wetter valleys Mountain Grey Gum, Messmate and Manna gum come into their own, while Blackwood, Sassafras and Hazel Pomaderris thrive under the top canopy.

November and December is the best time of year to visit this Park to see the heathland birds and wildflowers at their best, but bear in mind that this Otway country and rain is not unknown! At 1100 mm per year it is best to go prepared!

There is a network of well sign posted tracks, some of which are 4WD only and others are open only in the dry season. There are perched lakes somewhere to be found in the park and they are worth searching for on foot, so a park map or large scale survey map is a sensible asset to get around with, apart from binocs, water and food for a full day's outing.

Chris Morris

### Rainbow Bee-eaters and Other Info.

Rainbow Bee-eaters are common birds around our house during the warmer months\*. The combination of brilliant turquoise, green blue, black and yellow body and iridescent coppery wings propelled at speed over the house dam or along the creek valley always stops us in our tracks. Most years we know where a nest site is - tunnelled into the road, dam or nearby creek bank. We now (Nov. 24) have been treated to a close up exhibition of another aspect of bee-eater life.

As I trundled towards our front door around 7pm I became aware of an chirruping parrot-like call from the carport gate. On the top bar was a pair of bee-eaters. I backed off, circled the house to enter by the rear, alerted my partner, and we crept to the nearest window for a remarkable very close up view.

One of the birds would leave the gate, fly to the ground and apparently busy itself with white quartz bits in the dry, bare gravel of the driveway. We could not imagine what insects it might have been after there except possibly ants. The spot is a favourite for the local sparrows' dust baths. Occasionally one or both birds would leave the gate for a fluttering flight of a few metres and then we observed beak bashing against the metal perch. Through the binocs. I was able to conform a bee in the beak being thoroughly walloped - like a miniature Kookaburra's lizard dinner. The food was then given to the other bird. We rushed to the obvious conclusion - a parent feeding its young. To our surprise, while the recipient of the gift was diverted coping with the food, she was mounted. We estimated mating took several minutes.

\*Bee-eaters move to Northern Australia, New Guinea and Indonesia during winter. Simpson and Day note that, "in different regions of Australia, they may be shot under permit because of their habit of catching bees around commercial hives."

Earlier in the season I was asking about the disappearance of Masked Lapwings (Spur-winged Plovers) chicks a few days after hatching. In recent Gould League radio broadcast it was remarked that the parents of this species always lead the chicks away from the nest site immediately after hatching.

I was also interested to hear that Grebe hatchlings are protected from danger by being tucked under the adult wing plumage while the mature bird dives under water - a feathery submarine. (And we thought it was our fault we couldn't always accurately count grebelings!)

Marg. Hunter

### Rare Bird Sighting at Lake Wendouree.

A recent weekend trip to Ballarat turned into a birding bonanza for us. The "Birdo Grapevine" informed us that there had been several sightings of the tiny, handsome and rarely seen Little Bittern in the reed beds at the western end of Lake Wendouree. Our early morning start proved well worthwhile as we (and an even earlier riser who had come up especially from Melbourne for the occasion) were able to get a good look at this secretive little bittern with its black crown and buff shoulder patch quite prominent. We were fortunate again on the Sunday morning to go to the same spot at the same time with the same result. We also met two local bird experts, and a patient search of the other reed beds revealed a very elusive Spotless Crake, some Baillons Crake, Little Grassbirds and an abundance of very active Reed Warblers.

The open waters held the usual supply of Black Swans, grebes, Musk and Black Ducks etc. and on both days we were treated to a flypast of a flock of 11 Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos which are apparently unusual over the lake area.

In a small backwater we found 2 pair of Blue-billed Ducks, one pair with young, and a Great Crested Grebe which we observed at a distance of only about ten metres. The Grapevine also told us of a very rare Hudsonian Godwit at Werribee and a Fiordland Penguin at Port Fairy, but we couldn't fit those in to our weekend!

Maureen and Ken Dredge

### Dawn Breakfast at Glenluce Springs

The count of birds for the morning was 20, of people was 10, and if somebody called C.... M... hadn't decided that as there was no bubbly mineral water and *some* sort of bubbly was needed who knows how many we might have seen? Actually, as has happened on numerous occasions, our dawn breakfast was eaten under an

overcast sky, and though there were plenty of birds around, identification proved a little difficult at times! We walked a short distance along the river, but couldn't cross, so eventually we decided that the next best place was Wesley Hill Market.

The list for the morning was -

Rufous Whistler, Yellow-faced, White-naped and Yellow-tufted Honeyeaters, Superb Blue Wrens, White-browed Scrubwrens, Crimson Rosellas, Yellow Robin, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Spotted Pardalote, Magpie, Australian Raven, Dusky Wood-swallow, Grey Shrike-thrush, Brown Treecreeper, Welcome Swallow, Yellow-rumped Thornbill, Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Collared Sparrow-hawk and Olive-backed Oriole.

Rita Mills

## Observations

- From Gary Sobey of Skydancers - "*Acraea andromicha andromacha* the Glass-wing Butterfly recorded 4/12/99 at Barkers Creek. A well worn, mated female in good condition. This is a first ever recording for the district that I am aware of. It was probably attracted by the plantings of *Passiflora cinabarina*, Native Passion Vine, in the nursery." By January 20 about 20 caterpillars had pupated and several Butterflies had emerged. There was also a male and female Red-capped Robin at the nursery in early December.
- Margaret Badminton saw the pair of Sacred Kingfishers which were nesting in the Canary Island Date Palm in the Botanical Gardens again feeding young, which means a second breeding at least. Margaret describes the birds approaching the nest hollow with food and flying straight in without pausing.
- More Cockatiel have been spotted around the district; Penny Garnett reported 10 from Carnoghans' Lane near Pilchers Bridge, and about 6 were spotted by those with Stan Bruton on the way to Tullaroop on the December outing. Penny also saw 2 Pelicans on Myrtle Creek Road.
- A mixed flock of about 100 birds, Galahs and Long-billed Corellas were feeding in the paddock opposite 118 Blakeley Road on Jan. 1. The Galah crèche had been around for a week or two but the other birds started to join it on Dec. 30. On Jan. 3 about 8.30 p.m. a huge flock, mainly of Longbilled Corellas, but with some Galahs, was noisily settling in the trees around our house and that of a neighbour. However the neighbours on both sides objected to both the noise and the potential loss of fruit so by yelling and banging a sheet of tin the birds were convinced that it wasn't really a good roosting spot after all! Amongst the Long-billed and Galah voices was another call, and I didn't get to check properly whether it was that of Sulphur-crested Cockatoos or Little Corellas. The calls are similar, but this one was different enough to make me curious. Rita Mills

- There were (2/1) many clumps of Tufted Bluebells on the roadside near Cameron's Crossing and on the Campbelltown Road near the Mt. Cameron turnoff, and Blushing Bindweed in quite sizable clumps, too. Rita Mills.
- Seen by Debbie Worland on 7/1 - 2 Black-faced Woodswallows, 2 Dusky Woodswallows and 2 Olive-backed Orioles to the right of the 17th tee at the Castlemaine Golf Course near a pile of dried branches.
- 11/1- Saw over a dozen Eltham Copper Butterflies behind the gardens and lake (in the butterfly area near one of the marked Bursaria plants). The butterflies were surprisingly aggressive towards other species of butterflies, and seemed quite approachable. Tristan Kennedy (Tris watched them for several minutes without them moving away from the spot. They seemed too intent on chasing the Common Browns)
- Seen near Middletons Creek on 21/1 - Hyacinth Orchids (one about 75 cm tall with 30 flowers), Mitchell Wattle still in flower and lots of Spreading Wattle in full flower. Rita Mills
- Albert Golden had a pair of Leaden Flycatchers nesting during November, but the nest was destroyed and he couldn't find any young, but later he saw the male feeding an almost full grown Pallid Cuckoo.
- George Broadway spotted a Leaden Flycatcher on the Poverty Gully Track. They also had a huge flock of Long-billed Corellas settle near the house in the pine and cypress trees one evening at the end of January.
- On 25/1/2000, Margaret Badminton watched a Satin Flycatcher with a dragonfly in its bill negotiating it with great difficulty at Up and Down Track, south of Glenluce. The only other birds present were Spotted Pardelotes, Australian Raven and a Brown Goshawk.
- A local beekeeper has commented that this season there is more honey than he's ever known before.
- John Turnbull's wild bees have swarmed this year and one hive is in a concrete Powercor pole. His Owlet Nightjars are back after an absence of a year or so. He reports that they have also had Hyacinth Orchids on the property. These orchids are probably more common than we think, but people tend not to "go bush" during the heat of summer when they are out.
- Chris Morris commented on a survey which suggests that many birds are coming further south, and he kept his eyes open on a trip to the Lakes Boga, and Tutchewop area and saw White-winged Wrens, Orange and Crimson Chats, Banded Stilts, Pied and Black Honeyeaters and Budgerigars. What was so unusual was that they were so numerous.
- Maureen Dredge has seen her first ever Owlet Nightjar - in Mopoke Gully near the waterwheel.
- Stephen Garnett found a dead fledgling Painted Honeyeater on the Irishtown side of Fryerstown, the opposite side of the township from the ones spotted by the group involved in the Bird Count.

- A flock of 20+ Zebra Finches were seen on Dogtrap Gully Road, Rowsley, on an Atlassing trip to the Werribee Gorge area. Margaret Badminton and Rita Mills

### **Bush Stone-curlew Survey**

The Department of Natural Resources and Environment has been conducting surveys into Bush Stone-curlews (*Burhinus grallarius*) in North Central Victoria. This consisted of follow-up monitoring on properties previously identified as containing Bush Stone-curlews. Site visits were made to areas to provide the department with information regarding the habitat contained in such areas.

The surveys were performed by a student of Natural Resource Management at Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE. This formed part of a practical placement for the completion of second year studies.

May thanks to the people who received telephone calls regarding this matter as they (the answers) helped form an insight to the plight of the Bush Stone-curlew.

Jay Gray  
Bendigo Regional Institute of TAFE

### **About the Gould League**

Education about the environment has always been a major focus of the Gould League. Since its inception, the Gould League has been a significant source of environmental information for teachers, parents and children.

A letter by Miss Jessie McMichael (a country teacher) to J.A.Leech (a senior educational administrator) led to the formation of the Gould League of Victoria. Beginning as the Gould League of Bird Lovers, the importance of caring about and protecting Australian birds provided a meaningful introduction to conservation issues for several generations of Victorian children.

The name honors the work of John and Elizabeth Gould, particularly because of their substantial contribution to scientific knowledge about Australian birds and animals. Gould Leagues in other parts of Australia have followed the same general outlook and approach. Each Gould League is an independent organisation, but there is considerable co-operation between the interstate Gould Leagues, including New South Wales, Western Australia, South Australia and Central Australia.

Support and involvement by the education community, a number of interest groups and associations, as well as individual citizens has ensured

that the Gould League remains responsive to the changing needs of environmental education in our society.

The Gould League has always aimed to use appropriate educational strategies for its activities. In earlier times, there were children's competitions in bird mimicry, sketching and painting, essays, field notes, original stories and poems. At present our consultancy services provide up-to-date guidance for teachers, and a wide range of printed materials (including posters, field guides, stickers and books) are widely used by teachers, parents and children.

Contributed by Beverly Mary Hill

### Adopt-a-highway

Just an update from your President!

This project is at last under control. I want to extend thanks to all of you who have helped on our clean up days. The first few were hard work but with time and extra hands our last working bee only took one hour.

Our next cleanup is to be -

**Saturday 12 Feb. (the morning of the outing) from 8 am to 9 am.**

Meet at Tait Carriages. Bring a hat, drink, and wear sturdy footwear.

NOTE. There will be no working bee in the event of rain or Total Fire Ban.

Thanks to all,

*Maureen*

### FROM THE BUSINESS MEETING-

A number of newsletters from other nature interest clubs are received regularly, and are available to club members. Some regularly received are from -

Sunraisia Field Naturalists, Bird Observers Club, Great Dividing Trail, Bendigo Field Naturalist

e.g. in the December "Wirakee" from Bendigo F.N.C. some items of interest are -

\*Frogs of Victoria (this includes a note on handling frogs to minimise harming them)

\*A report of a morning that the Bendigo club spent with eleven children from grades 4-6 from several district Primary Schools. The children enjoyed themselves immensely.

\*The Cabbage White Butterfly

\*A report from the 1999 Australian Youth Parliament for the Environment Convention.

\*Terms of reference for the EEC's investigation of Victoria's Box-Ironbark Forests and Woodlands.

FROM THE EDITOR - Thank you to all contributors to the C.N. over the past 12 months. Every article and report, no matter how small, helps to make the Castlemaine Naturalist an interesting newsletter for all to enjoy. *Rita*

## CASTLEMAINE NATURALIST, FEBRUARY 2000

### C.F.N.C. PROGRAMME

**General Meetings** Are held in the Uniting church (UCA) hall, at 8.00pm on the second Friday of each month, except January. Entrances to the car parks are beside the Art Gallery and beside the Church building in Lyttleton Street. **Excursions** leave promptly at times stated, usually on the Saturday after the general meeting. There are NO excursions on TOTAL FIRE BAN days.

**Business Meetings** are held at 38 Campbell Street on the 4th Thursday of each month, except December, at 7.30pm. All members are invited to attend.

**VISITORS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME TO CLUB MEETINGS AND EXCURSIONS**

**Fri. Feb. 11 Annual Meeting.** Alpine Flora and Fauna, speaker, Gary Cheers, Maryborough FNC. 8pm, UCA hall.

**Sat Feb. 12 Trentham Waters Road** (note change of venue) This is a regrowth area after bushfire and is rich in birdlife. Leave 13 Mostyn St. at 1.30pm. Leader, M. Badminton.

**Fri. Mar 10 The Loddon Water Catchment** Speaker is Greg Peters of the Water Catchment Authority. Greg gave us a very interesting talk in August on his work on stream management.

**Sat Mar. 11 Upper Loddon Forest, Glenluce South.** Leave 13 Mostyn St. at 1.30pm

**Fri. - Mon. ,Mar. 10-12. VFNCA Campout at Geelong.**

**\*Heritage Week Walk** conducted by C.F.N.C. and Mt. Alexander Shire Walks and Trails Advisory Board, from the Garfield Wheel to Welsh village and Expedition Pass and return. Thurs. Mar. 30, 8.30am - take morning tea.

**Sun. April 1, 10.00am - take lunch**

**Fri. Apr. 14 The Diggings Project.** The speaker will be one of the guides who is studying the area. UCA hall 8pm

**Sat. April 19 A visit to the Diggings Project.** Leave 13 Mostyn St. at 1.30 pm.

**Midwinter Meeting, July?** It is planned to have a meeting during winter where members can pass on information about their favourite interesting places in Victoria. Put your thinking caps on and be ready to contribute.

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**1999 Committee** M. Dredge (President) Ph 5470 6474, E. Perkins (V.P. and Grievance Officer), B. Maund (Sec.) ph. 5472 4354, M. Badminton (treas.) R. Mills (N/L Ed. and P.O.), G. Broadway, J. Turnbull, M. Oliver, C. Morris, K. Turner, Z. Thomas.

**Subscription suggestions for 2000** - that 5% be added to subs. to cover GST costs for 6 months. Therefore subs would be -

Ordinary Membership: Single, \$22 + 5% (\$1.10) = \$23.10 Rounded = \$23

Family, \$30 + 5% (\$1.50) = \$31.50 Rounded = \$32

Pensioner or student: Single \$19 + 5% (95c) = \$19.95. Rounded = \$20

Family \$24 + 5% (\$1.20) = \$225.20. Rounded = \$25

Supporting: \$31 + 5% (\$1.55) = \$32.65. Rounded = \$33

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Inc.

P.O. Box 324, Castlemaine. 3450.

Incorporation # A0003010B